

FRESHER SYSTEM

THE NEW OLD BARBARISM

I have been meaning to write on the subject of a "Fresher System" for some time and have finally been prompted to do so by "Robespierre" in last WORONI. Some have thought that the article was in jest, but it does express a point of view that is held by some people here.

The major premise of such a view would seem to be the old levelling one, "everybody should fit in." As I understand it, this is also the present Warden's aim, but the methods of achieving it are far different.

The trouble with a fresher system as a means of making people "fit in" is that it ignores individuality and is most favoured by those "seniors" who desire to demonstrate their "superiority" and have not other way to command "respect." It is moreover, a perpetuation of the schoolboy mentality that demands that respect be accorded on account of age, and regardless of ability or worth.

There are, in such a system, a number of strands. One is a hangover from the Public School system, where the emphasis is on fanatical group loyalty and the "build-

ing of character." This sort of education is well-known to have produced a set of men with uniform attitudes.

Quite possibly many University students could benefit by discovering that their wants are not pivotal to the world, but "fresher systems" substitute a group narcissism for a personal one.

"Robespierre seems to desire that freshers be "organised," but the abuses to which the system is subject defeat this aim, even were it desirable. And it is useless to say that abuses can be checked and that all "respectable colleges" have it. There is no such organised brutishness in the Melbourne Colleges.

The writer knows of several cases in Sydney where students were subjected to the most humiliating tortures — there is no other word for it. This results from the fact

that the sort of senior who takes part in this has no possibility of commanding respect, he can only inspire fear, and so he is as cruel as possible. You can get your own back later? So we breed a race of people who are only waiting to get their own back.

There is another strand, that of "mateship." This sort of outdated and self-conscious concept is far from applicable to a University. Friendships of a mature sort are formed on account of a similarity of tastes or ideals, or of personal respect. The sort of crash programme of friendship represented by fresher systems is aimed only at developing superficial social reflexes, and not civilised friendship. In fresher system is to be found that latent factor referred to by many in the Australian character that makes them "non-practising homosexuals."

One of the great virtues of the C.U.C. since I have been here is that the small number of full-timers means that the "freshers" and "seniors" are on an equal footing. Differentiations occur in intelligence, not rank, and if a fresher can hold his own in ability he is encouraged. Nothing could be stupider than a stratification where rank is frequently pulled.

In Australia, freshers are usually fairly young. Where they are most deficient, as a rule, is not in their ability to "take it," all that is brought out by the fresher system, but in matters of taste and discrimination and in criticism of their inconsistencies of thought and lack of knowledge.

A system that teaches that conformity to the superficialities is the main criterion of a University student is monstrously at odds with the spirit of enquiry that Universities should encourage. If refuge can be taken in the complacency of being "a good bloke," concern with questions of values and taste becomes so much surplusage.

Surely the motivating spirit of a University is to develop the critical faculty, and surely "organised" adjustment through legalised bullying, both as an aim and as practiced, is opposed to this. It represents a myth of the fanatical, irrational sort that cannot be of assistance to University education.

It does not, in its more emotional form, concern itself with practical ends. An example is telephone answering: quite obviously a roster of phone-answers is desirable, and if the work is to be spread evenly it is not unjust that freshers do it — they have less to do than senior students. Probably it is a "good thing" that they learn "service to others," but this lesson is a result of the usefulness of the task, not of some mystique involved in being given a lower position.

To conclude, fresher systems are inimical to a University and involve so many flat contradictions in their mysticism, and are subject to such abuses, that they must be rejected.

—RON FRASER.

AEROPLANE SPOTTING DURING VACATION



THREE FRESHERS AT FAIRBAIRN AIRPORT DURING SECOND VACATION

ANOTHER COLLEGE WANTS AUTONOMY

The Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales in Parliament assembled.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THOUSAND RESIDENTS OF THE CITY OF NEWCASTLE AND THE HUNTER VALLEY RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH THAT WE—

1. BELIEVE THAT THE NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES SHOULD BE GRANTED AUTONOMY AND,
2. HEREBY CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES TO CONSIDER AS A MATTER OF URGENCY THE GRANTING OF COMPLETE AUTONOMY TO THE COLLEGE.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS PRAY THAT AN AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY WILL BE ESTABLISHED IN NEWCASTLE BY AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES TO PROVIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND INCORPORATION OF A UNIVERSITY AT NEWCASTLE; TO VEST IN THAT UNIVERSITY THE PROPERTY HELD BY OR VESTED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES IN THE NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES; TO DISOLVE THAT COLLEGE; TO AMEND THE SUPERANNUATION ACT 1916, THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1919, AND ANY OTHER ACTS IN CERTAIN RESPECTS AND FOR PURPOSES CONNECTED THEREWITH.

YOUR PETITIONERS AS IN DUTY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY.

Signed this Twenty-eight day of July, One thousand nine hundred and sixty-one.

Acting President of the Newcastle University College Students' Association
 Honorary Secretary of the Newcastle University College Students' Association
 Honorary Treasurer Newcastle University College Students' Association

News from Newcastle

Copy of an analysis of the position at present regarding the establishment of a University of Newcastle, presented to the Hon. Mr. E. Wetherall, M.L.A.

"As the position now stands, we feel that the creation of a fully autonomous University in Newcastle requires action by the Government in the form of an Act of Parliament.

You, sir, on 15th November, 1960, when speaking to a motion for autonomy, moved by the Hon. member for Kahibah, Mr. Stewart, said:

"It will be appreciated that the present University establishment at Newcastle is a College of the University of New South Wales. The Government would not interfere in the administration of an Autonomous University, or one of its colleges, without first ascer-

taining the attitude of the governing body of the University."

We submit, sir, that the granting of autonomy goes far beyond the question of "administration" within the present University and its Colleges.

In a letter dated 5th May, 1960, replying to the then President of the Newcastle University College Students' Association, Mr. A. Nelmes, Professor Baxter stated:

"The affairs of the Council are regulated by an Act of Parliament, and this Act gives the Council the power to establish and maintain Colleges in various places and specifically refers to Newcastle as one of these. This the Council of the University has done, and I presume that until Parliament alters the Act or makes some other decision the Council will continue to maintain this College as a constituent College of the University of New South Wales."

The letter continues: "The question of an autonomous University in Newcastle is clearly not the concern of the Council."

Since the establishment of an autonomous University in Newcastle is not the concern of, nor within the power of the University of New South Wales, we call upon the Government to consider as a matter of urgency the creation of an autonomous University, Newcastle. We ask you, Sir, to present our claims and proposals on the matter to parliament."

INTER-VARSITY DEBATES FESTIVAL

The Inter-Varsity Debates Festival was held in Melbourne from Monday the 14th to Tuesday the 22nd of August. The Universities of New South Wales, New England, Queensland, Sydney, Adelaide, Western Australia, Melbourne, Tasmania, New Zealand and the A.N.U. all sent teams.

There was an informal meeting at Norm Fisher's flat when we arrived, and on Monday we were welcomed by Sir George Paton. Later we went to a reception by the Lord Mayor at the Town Hall.

Unhappy Event

Unfortunately, a rather unhappy event occurred between these two functions — we participated in our first debate.

This was "That Sportsmanship is no Substitute for Victory," with the A.N.U. in the affirmative against the University of Queensland.

George Martin spoke first and also exercised the right of reply, followed by the Don, and Ed. We lost, we never looked like winning, but we did not really disgrace ourselves.

Our second debate was on Wednesday the 16th, in the negative against New South Wales, who had already defeated New England.

The topic was "That Indonesia's Cause in West New Guinea is a Just One." The speakers were, in order, George Martin, Heather Sutherland and Ed Simon.

Again we lost, but this time very narrowly — we really thought we were going to win. However, our manner and technique of debating is not as confident, smooth and histrionic as that of the debaters from the other Universities. We are just not as good, although our arguments are sound, and occasionally intelligent.

On Monday the Debate Convention was held, Next year Intersarsity Debating will be held in Perth.

Probably the best story (well, the best repeatable story, anyway) of the debates comes, so they say, when a couple of debaters were being interviewed by the News Service of the television station HSV7.

The announcer asked one of the New Zealanders to "debate something." Whereupon the budding orator burst forth into a speech to the effect "that the assassination of Leon Trotsky is of more importance to mankind than the assassination of Jesus Christ." Melbourne shuddered.

HEATHER SUTHERLAND, Secretary, A.N.U. Debating Society.

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